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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the foundation of an exploratory study about the effects of primary school education provision by the ultra-orthodox Shas party on electoral support for the party in Israel. Specifically, the research explores the question of whether and to what extent religious organizations that provide services for their clients are able to redirect the loyalties of their targeted communities away from the state and its ideology and toward the ideological goals of their organization. In addition to the discussion of prevailing theories for Shas's party success, the paper theorizes how the success of Shas can be regarded and tested as a case of political clientelism, manifested through the provision of services by the party's publicly funded education network, the Wellspring of Torah Education. Currently, the Shas school system operates schools (n=101) and kindergarten classrooms (n=484). The empirical research for this project is a work in progress. Therefore, no definitive conclusions are presented at this time, pending completion of field research in Israel. (Contains 51 references, 2 notes, and 1 table.) (BT)

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Schools and Votes: Primary Education Provision and Electoral Support for the Shas Party in Israel

Eitan Schiffman
University of Colorado at Boulder

schiffme@colorado.edu
Department of Political Science
Ketchum Hall, Campus Box 333
University of Colorado, Boulder 80309

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Introduction

This paper presents the foundation of an exploratory study of the effects of primary-school education provision by the ultra-orthodox *Shas* party on electoral support for the party in Israel. More generally, my research explores the question of whether and to what extent religious organizations that provide services for their clients are able to redirect the loyalties of their targeted communities away from the state and its ideology and toward the ideological goals of their organization. Alongside its discussion of prevailing theories for Shas's success, this paper theorizes how the success of Shas can be regarded and tested as a case of political clientelism, manifested through the provision of services by the party's publicly funded education network, the Wellspring of Torah Education. The empirical research for this project is a work in progress and therefore no definitive conclusions are presented at this time, pending completion of the field research in Israel.

In the course of modernization, political patronage often results from a process whereby political parties or the state bureaucracy penetrate peripheral and less developed areas and capture roles formerly filled by traditional patrons. These emerging political actors provide services in realms such as tax collection and education in exchange for political allegiance or socialization into the modern political culture of the nation-state. Political scientists and anthropologists have recounted the transformation of patron-client ties into modern political patronage in a diverse range of societies, from Malaysia to Italy to Venezuela (Scott 1970; Weingrod 1968). In many late developing societies, patron-client relations evolve into clientelist politics when *state* agents assume "brokerage" roles and the more expansive ideologies that they espouse, including modernist and nationalist

ones, subsume the parochial attachments of local populations. In contrast to these integrative means, the political clientelism cultivated by the *Shas* party in Israel attempts to contract citizens' ties from the state's civic and integrative ethos and institutions, directing individuals' primary loyalties and affiliations away from the state and toward parochial religious authorities.

The tension or harmony between a state and its society is a structural factor with tremendous implications for the political system. Scholars have related the congruence between the authority patterns and values of state leaders and societal subgroups to political stability (Eckstein 1992), economic modernization (Evans 1995), political development (Deutsch 1961), efficient governance (Putnam 1993) and the appeasement of nationalism (Gellner 1983). Discongruence between the state and society has been linked to revolution (Skocpol 1979), repression (Davenport 1999) and disastrous development schemes (Scott 1998). The struggle between state leaders who aspire for modernization through industrialization and secularism and the societal sectors that wish to preserve traditional practices and authority patterns, such as those based on religion, has been a central theme of development studies for more than half a century (Geertz 1963).

Religion provides believers with systematic explanations of right and wrong behavior. These explanations are drawn from scripture and traditions and the authoritative interpretations thereof by recognized religious leaders (Kopelowitz and Diamond 1998, 671). The communal identities and authority patterns maintained by religious groups frequently conflict with the goals and authority patterns of modern secular states (Casanova 1994). The participation of religious forces in politics is subject

to controversy. On the one hand, the desire of religious fundamentalists to expand the strictness and scope of implementation of religious law can have profound effects on the personal freedoms of private citizens (Sivan 1990, 2). But on the other hand, there is no denying that the participation of religious groups in national politics introduces more robust political contestation, a hallmark of healthy democracy.

Shas and Ultra-Orthodoxy

Shas, the Hebrew acronym of Sephardi Torah Guardians, was founded in Jerusalem in 1983 by a group of Sephardi rabbis who broke away from Agudat Israel, the Ashkenazi-dominated ultra-orthodox party that had been the major party of ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel since before the founding of the state. The Sephardi leaders charged the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox community with discriminating against Sephardim and ran their first slate of candidates under the Shas party in the 1983 elections for the Jerusalem city council. Since then, Shas has seen remarkable electoral success at the local and national levels. In 1984 Shas garnered four seats in the Knesset elections and has increased its representation in parliament ever since. Shas won six seats in 1988 and kept the same number in 1992, despite the arrival of many non-Shas voting immigrants from the former Soviet Union. At the same time the party expanded its base of support well beyond the ultra-orthodox Sephardim who were its original constituents (Peled 1998, 703).

The ultra-orthodox or "Haredi" Jewish community in Israel is a well-defined minority that seeks to preserve its identity as a traditional Jewish society in the face of Zionism and secular Israeli society (Friedman 1991, i). Haredi political opposition in

Israel stems from a religious belief that the state of Israel is the product of an illegitimate attempt by Zionists to shape Jewish destiny, which Haredim (plural) regard as a mutiny against God (Friedman 1990, 131). Orthodox Judaism has produced varying interpretations of Zionism and the meaning of the establishment of the state of Israel. These interpretations range from the Haredi group known as Neturei Karta, who totally reject Zionism, to religious ultra-nationalists represented by Gush Emunim, who regard Zionism and the establishment of the state of Israel as an important step in the process of messianic redemption (Friedman 1990).

Shas has maintained an ambivalent attitude toward Zionism, which has made the party palatable to ultra-orthodox as well as non-Haredi voters. The party's spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, was formerly chief Sephardi rabbi of Israel, an official position of the state, yet the party consistently rails against the state's civic institutions, including the Ministry of Education and the Supreme Court (Gorli 2001). The charter of the party's educational network forbids employees from turning to the state labor courts to resolve disputes in the workplace. But despite the contempt expressed by its leaders toward Israel's civic institutions, Shas is unique among ultra-orthodox parties for its willingness to share complicity in the affairs of state (Dayan 1999, 8; Peled 1998, 707). While other ultra-orthodox parties have historically refrained from joining Israeli governments because they will not accept for themselves collective responsibility for legislation that might contradict Jewish law (Lehman-Wilzig 1992, 126), Shas has not felt similarly constrained. Unlike other ultra-orthodox parties, Shas parliamentarians serve in government Cabinets and the party is unabashed about using state institutions to maximize its political and economic gains.

Haredi literally means one who is afraid (of God). Ultra-orthodox groups that rejected Zionist aspirations formed the Haredi "sect" in Jerusalem in 1918 (Friedman 1990, 128n). In the 1920s and 30s, during periods of Jewish-Arab intercommunal violence in Palestine, many ultra-orthodox Jews became reconciled to some forms of cooperation with the Zionist leadership for defensive purposes (Friedman 1990, 128). In the realm of education, however, ultra-orthodox Jews remained outside the system of schools devised by Zionist leaders, which they regarded as impious (Elazar 1997). After Israel's independence, Haredi groups initially attempted to maintain their isolation from the state and from secular Israeli society. However, the vast majority of Haredim eventually abandoned the principle of isolation from the state in order to elect Haredi representatives to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, and to obtain state funds for their religious institutions (Friedman 1991, v).

Today, the ultra-orthodox community in Israel is highly dependent upon the state. More than half of ultra-orthodox men engage in religious study and many do not enter the work force until well into their 40s (Berman 1999a, 9; Ilan 1999). Most ultra-orthodox families receive the bulk of their income in transfer payments from the government and for this reason Haredi parties are extremely concerned with the political goal of securing financial support from the state for the ultra-orthodox public and its institutions (Berman 1999a; Friedman 1991, iv). There is strong evidence to suggest that the state's largesse to the ultra-orthodox community has exacerbated that community's dependency (Berman 1999a). As state allocations to ultra-orthodox institutions and the Haredi public have grown, so too has the community's dependency, as indicated by the unemployment of Haredi men and rising fertility rates. The amount of transfer payments to the ultra-

orthodox sector is likely to grow in upcoming years in light of the political strength of Haredi parties and the astonishing fertility rate among ultra-orthodox women, which was more than seven and a half children per woman in the mid-1990s (Berman 1999a, 21).

The rise of Shas has brought about the redirection of many state subsidies for the ultra-orthodox to the Sephardi ultra-orthodox community (Berman 1999b, 13). Economist Eli Berman (1999b) finds a clear link between state subsidies for the ultra-orthodox and increased dependency in that community (Berman 1999b; Ilan 1999). The structure of state benefits for full-time religious students and their families promotes higher fertility and poses a disincentive for ultra-orthodox men to seek work. With the rise in the relative strength of the Sephardi ultra-orthodox community relative to the Ashkenazi community, the trappings of dependency have proliferated among ultra-orthodox Sephardim. Between 1984 and 1999 the proportion of Sephardi Haredi men in yeshiva increased by 42 percent, from 38 percent to 54 percent of the Sephardi adult Haredi male population (Ilan 2000). During the same period the average childbirth rate among ultra-orthodox Sephardim grew by an astounding two children per family (Ilan 2000).

Meteoric Ascendance: Theories

In the 1996 and 1999 elections Shas emerged as the third largest political party, behind Labor and Likud. Shas currently holds 17 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (just two less than Likud) and five ministerial posts in the National Unity government led by prime minister Ariel Sharon. As the party has grown in political strength, it has also succeeded in institutionalizing the fruits of its coalition bargaining efforts (Willis 1995, 131).

Notably, Shas has solicited tremendous amounts of state funds for the "Wellspring of Torah Education," its network of primary religious educational institutions. The survival of the previous Israeli government led by Ehud Barak was frequently held in the balance over the question of transferring funds and providing debt relief to the Shas school system (*New York Times*, 28 Dec. 1999).

Shas's meteoric rise has been explained by institutional and cultural factors that consider the party's ascendance both in the context of Israel's electoral institutions and political competition and its demographic, social and religious milieu. Four major factors have been invoked to explain the electoral success of the Shas party, and in this paper I suggest a fifth, to explain the basis of the party's mass appeal. The explanations proffered are: (1) Institutional structures, namely, change in the electoral process and the enhanced leverage of small parties aligned with neither left nor right (Hazan 1996; Bueno de Mesquita 2000); (2) Growing attachments to traditional religion and the increased salience of religious identity as a factor guiding political preferences (Sheleg 2000); (3) The increased salience of ethnicity, coupled with religion, as a factor guiding electoral preferences (Herzog 1984; Fischer 1991); and (4) Disillusionment with secular Zionism and the appeal of religious Judaism as a response to the social and economic peripheralization of Mizrahim in Israeli society (Peled 1998, 707).

To this list I submit that another reason for Shas's impressive growth is its successful cultivation of political clients through the provision of education and welfare services. Shas's inclusion in governments, and thus its ability to deliver the fruits of coalition agreements to its constituents —in the form of subsidies and services—has for many years fueled its electoral success. Through its Wellspring of Torah Education

network, I hypothesize that Shas endeavors to compete with the state as a broker of primary educational services and thus win the support and loyalty of constituents who are not adequately served in this capacity by the state. In trying to provide for its clients in ways that the state cannot, I maintain that Shas has been able to redirect the loyalties of its targeted communities away from the state and its ideology and toward the party's own ideological goals.

Despite the fact that Shas imparts to its followers a non-Zionist ideology that is anathema to the state and that it wishes to establish a state that is based on the rule of Jewish law, successive Israeli governments have facilitated Shas's growth by including the party in governing coalitions and funding its system of religious education. The Shas school system currently operates 101 schools and 484 kindergarten classrooms.[1] The network's NIS 100 million deficit ($25 million) gives some indication of the scope of its operations (Sontag 1999). My empirical research tests the proposition that support for Shas is greater in those localities with educational institutions belonging to the Wellspring of Torah Education.

Electoral Change

A key institutional factor that contributed to Shas's success in the 1996 and 1999 elections was the separate ballot for Prime Minister, an innovation that was introduced before the 1996 elections and repealed in 2001. The separate ballot temporarily changed the Israeli polity from a pure parliamentary system to a unique hybrid of parliamentarism

[1] The number of schools and kindergarten classrooms is based on data furnished by the Ministry of Education in November 2000. In July 2001, the Wellspring of Torah Education reported operating 126 schools.

and presidentialism (Hazan 1996). The law allowed for ticket-splitting and enabled voters to cast one ballot for their preferred candidate for Prime Minister and another for their preferred political party in the Knesset. The separate ballot was, overall, beneficial to smaller parties and harmful to the largest parties, Labor and Likud (Bueno de Mesquita 2000).

Small parties, especially the ultra-orthodox, have held great significance in Israeli national politics since the mid-1980s because of the close balance that has been maintained between left and right blocs in Israel. Table 1 shows the close parity that existed between the right and left Zionist blocs in the Knesset between 1984 and 1999.[2] My tally of parties in these two blocs excludes Arab and ultra-orthodox parties (which, aside from Shas, do not serve in government Cabinets) as well as avowedly "centrist" parties. In the 1984 elections only 180 votes separated the right and left Zionist blocs and in almost every election since then, the two blocs have been separated by only a few parliamentary seats.

Since 1990, after six years of National Unity government, both Labor and Likud have had to join with smaller parties outside of their traditional blocs (frequently ultra-orthodox parties) in order to form governing coalitions of minimum winning size. This state of affairs has bestowed upon "pragmatic" ultra-orthodox parties—which agree to join with either Labor or Likud—inordinate leverage in pressing their demands from the government. The proliferation of small parties (15 parties are currently represented in the 120-seat Knesset) occasioned by the introduction of the separate ballot has increased the

[2] The 15th Knesset, elected in 1999, is less amenable to this type of analysis. Before its disintegration in 2000, Ehud Barak's government originally included the right-wing National Religious Party (NRP) and his One Israel party included the Gesher faction, led by former Likud stalwart David Levy.

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capacity of small parties to at least threaten to bring down the government, a situation that has made Israeli governments highly unstable.

Table 1. Left and Right Blocs in Israeli Elections, 1984-1996

Total number of seats in the Knesset: 120

	Right bloc	Left bloc	Right bloc votes	Left bloc votes	Right bloc seats	Left bloc seats	Coalition Leader
11th Knesset (1984)	Likud Tehiya-Tzomet NRP Morasha Ometz	Alignment Shinui CRM Yahad	875,001	874,821	53	54	National Unity Govt
12th Knesset (1988)	Likud NRP Tehiya Tsomet	Alignment CRM Mapam Shinui	915,244	878,759	50	49	National Unity Govt 1988-90 Likud 1990-92
13th Knesset (1992)	Likud Tsomet NRP Moledet	Labor Meretz	947,258	1,157,477	49	56	Labor
14th Knesset (1996)	Likud-Gesher-Tsomet NRP Moledet	Labor Meretz	1,079,674	1,045,016	43	43	Likud

Source: State of Israel, Knesset Election Results.

Ethnicity and Religiosity

The banner carried by the Shas movement combines a blend of ethnic, religious and political messages. Shas is, principally, an ultra-orthodox party that claims to represent disadvantaged Sephardi Jews. The party's representatives in the Knesset are without exception ultra-orthodox Jews and they take their voting cues from the movement's spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, and the Council of Torah Sages over which he presides. The party's ultra-orthodox identity is based on its self-definition as such, the composition of its leadership, its radical position on issues of religion and state,

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and the nature and content of its educational system (Yuchtman-Yaar and Hermann 2000, 33). The long-term objective of the Shas party was stated succinctly by former Shas party chairman Arye Deri who told a crowd at an April 1999 rally that "the objective of Shas is to change the secular character of the State of Israel. Shas is pressing to make the state of Israel a state of *halakhah* (Jewish law)" (Dayan 1999, 8).

Many Shas voters, however, are not ultra-orthodox and have in the past supported non-ultra-orthodox parties. A key to Shas's success has been its ability to make inroads among Sephardi Jews who are not ultra-orthodox or are only partially observant. Shas garnered more than 430,000 votes in the 1999 elections. It is doubtful if in all of Israel there are that many voters who can be described as being both Sephardi and ultra-orthodox. A *Yediot Aharonot* survey published May 28, 1999, by one of Israel's leading pollsters, Mina Tzemach, confirmed this impression, indicating that among voters who cast their ballot for Shas in the 1999 election, only 55 percent favor the establishment of a *halakhic* state (cited in Chitreet 2000, 8).

Shas's appeal to non-ultra-orthodox voters can be attributed to the party's shrewd blend of ethnic and religious messages (Fisher 1991, Willis 1995). A key to comprehending Shas's appeal to non-orthodox Sephardim is understanding the religiosity of many Sephardi Jews in Israel. By and large, Israel's Sephardi Jews defy categorization as either religious or secular. Even a tripartite classification as religious, traditional, or secular, often fails to capture the salience of the population's strong identity as Jews, even if that deeply felt identity is matched by only *some* ritual observances (Sheleg 2000, 190). The preeminence of religious identity among Sephardim is indicated by the recent trend for religious revivalism in Israel, which is

much stronger among Sephardim than Ashkenazim. Some manifestations of this trend include participation in Sephardi traditions such as cults of reverence for traditional saints and use or display of religious amulets. Growing awareness of discrimination in Israeli society, and the seeming elusiveness of integration on equal terms has also driven many second generation Mizrahim back to the traditional fold embraced by their parents (Sheleg 2000, 197).

Ethnic parties were for years deemed taboo in an Israeli society that was bent on constructing a Jewish-Israeli collective identity among its disparate Jewish immigrants who hailed from scores of different countries, and in the face of the state's external enemies (Herzog 1984; Fischer 1991). The term "ethnic party" as it is used here refers to Horowitz's (1991) conception of the term, which does not imply that a majority of members of the ethnic group vote for the party, but rather that its support base comes almost exclusively from a particular ethnic group. In the Israeli usage of the term, "ethnic" lists are often those designated as such by the news media, and they include parties that purport to represent Mizrahim, Arabs and, more recently, Russians and other immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Between 1948 and 1984, 38 ethnic parties ran lists in Knesset elections, with relatively little success (Herzog 1990, 92).

Legitimization of ethnic political organization was slow to emerge in Israel, though for many years Mizrahim expressed grievances about the difficult circumstances they faced as immigrants and the demeaning treatment they received from leaders and functionaries of the ruling Mapai party, the forerunner of Labor. Many Sephardi immigrants who came to Israel until 1964 languished for long periods in absorption camps until they were moved into hastily built housing projects which by the 1970s

seemed decrepit and were beset by many social blights, including unemployment, drugs and crime. The deprivation of Mizrahim and their resulting anger came to the fore during riots in the Wadi Salib neighborhood of Haifa in 1959 and in 1971 in protests led by an organization calling itself the Black Panthers, in poor neighborhoods in Jerusalem and in development towns. In the 1970s, a grassroots movement known as the "Tents Movement" called attention to the plight of disadvantaged neighborhoods through a series of sit-ins and calls for major reform. With the advent of the Project Renewal urban renewal program in the late 1970s, the movement's local councils were incorporated by the state, and they went on to comprise the steering committees that made policy at the neighborhood level (Hasson and Ley 1994, 227). In all these years, Sephardi protest never took truly radical form because the protesting populations continued to identify with the state's Zionist basis. Moreover, the protesters' demands were not grounded in universal conceptions of human or civil rights, seeing as they did not address the plight of Palestinians or the Arab citizens of Israel (Chitreet 1999; Fischer 1991).

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Mizrahi disillusionment with the ruling Labor party grew widespread and Mizrahi voters began turning en masse to the Likud (Yishai 1982). Mizrahi voters chose Likud by a 2:1 margin over Labor in the 1981 elections (Fischer 1991, 11). When the Likud came to power in 1977, it had already added many Sephardim to its ranks, from the time when it was the principal opposition to Labor. After its accession, the Likud quickly attempted to "kill two birds with one stone" by expanding settlement construction in the occupied territories near Jerusalem—in keeping with its vision of a "greater Israel"—while claiming to address the housing crisis facing poor Mizrahim (Chitreet 1999, 297).

The emergence of Shas is viewed in many historical narratives as the outgrowth of a long process of Sephardi disillusionment with secular Zionism, a process that left many Sephardim feeling deprived and denuded of their ethnic pride and traditions (Horowitz 2000; Fischer 1991; Chitreet 1999). For many years Sephardi traditions were treated dismissively in ultra-orthodox educational institutions as well as formal state institutions such as the army and state schools. Some of the deprivations experienced by poorer Sephardim, such as their inability to accumulate capital because of the lease terms in public housing where they lived and the systematic tracking of Sephardi pupils in vocational and non-academic tracks, exacerbated the prevailing inequality (Elimelech and Lewin-Epstein 1998; Shavit 1990).

Until the emergence of Shas, discontented Sephardim mainly expressed themselves through the established vehicles of Labor and revisionist Zionism. This conformity was punctuated by relatively few instances of ethnically based social mobilization: the Wadi Salib riots, the Black Panthers, the "Tents Movement," and the Tami party described below.

Before Shas, the last ethnic party that purported to represent Mizrahim expressly was Tami, the Movement for Israel's Tradition, which won three Knesset seats in 1981 and one seat in 1984. Tami's leaders included defectors from existing parties, including Labor and the National Religious Party. The party's leaders, not unlike those of Shas, used their connections in the party branches from which they defected to build a following for the new party. In its campaigns, Tami fused a message of Sephardi pride with a sign of respect for religious tradition by placing Aharon Abu-Hatzera, son of the

revered Moroccan Jewish saint Yisrael Abu-Hatzera (known popularly as the Baba Sali), at the top of its parliamentary list (Herzog 1990).

According to this line of analysis, the Shas party successfully appealed to the interwoven religious and ethnic identity of many Mizrahim and was thus able to overcome the taboo against ethnic parties in Israel. Since the formation of Shas, another ethnic party, Yisrael Ba'aliya, a political party of recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union has also found some success. According to Hannah Herzog, "Lumping together religious and political motifs is a way of getting around barriers that Israeli society has erected before political activists of Afro-Asian origin" (Herzog 1990, 109). This perspective suggests that in Israeli society, dissenting from the secular outlook of Israel's founders is considered less subversive than ethnic mobilization that could undermine the "ingathering of the exiles" idealized by Zionism. The rise of Shas has transformed the character of Mizrahi protest in Israel and demonstrated that Jewish religious radicalism is more acceptable than radical mobilization based on ethnicity or social class.

Structural Materialism

Still other theories explain the rise of Shas in structural materialist terms. Since the mid-1980s, small ethnocentric parties have been highly successful among Sephardim, who, according to Yoav Peled (1992), are positioned in the lower strata of the Israeli "cultural division of labor". Peled sees the Israeli labor market as composed, ethnically, of four hierarchically ordered groups: Ashkenazi Jews, Sephardi Jews, Israeli Arabs, and Palestinians from the occupied territories (1992, 350). Sephardim compete with Arabs

for jobs at the lower rungs of the occupational ladder, which heightens their mutual antagonism. Lewin-Epstein (1989) finds that "hostility toward Arabs and the desire to exclude them from the labour market" are closely related to respondents' labor market positions (cited in Peled 1992). Therefore, support for right-wing parties is high in development towns where there is a heightened sense of economic insecurity and malaise and competition between Jewish and Arab workers is relatively intense (Peled 1992, 354).

By voting for Shas, Peled argues, Sephardim assume an integrative orientation toward the state's ideology by demonstrating what they regard to be intense patriotism and increasing their prestige relative to Palestinians, whom they regard as their chief competitors in the labor market (Peled 1998; Yishai 1982, 96). Peled argues that "the roots of *mizrahi* discontent do not lie primarily in cultural maladjustment but, rather, in their economic and social peripheralization within Israeli society" (1998, 707). Mizrahim have responded to their structural marginalization, Peled argues, not by ethnic separatism—by which they could unwittingly ally themselves with the Palestinians against Zionism—but through an "integrative, politicized religious consciousness, that expresses itself, electorally, in voting for Shas" (Peled 1998, 706).

Class analysis may provide an explanation for why Sephardi voters in development towns choose Shas, but it does not necessarily follow that Shas is the party most responsive to their programmatic demands. Based on the actual policies that the party pursues in the Knesset, Shas can not be described as a political party of the proletariat. In his study of the 13th Knessest (1992-96), Ben-Arye (1999) finds no significant relationship between religiosity, ethnic origin and residence in a development

town, and legislative action on behalf of social issues. One reporter has called these findings "embarrassing to Shas" (Ilan 2001). Shas has been prolific in securing government support for ultra-orthodox institutions and the Haredi lifestyle, but Ben-Arye finds that religious Knesset members from Shas and other parties are not more active on social issues than are other parliamentarians. Ben-Arye finds that the Knesset members who are most involved in setting social policy are left wing and women, neither of whom can be counted in the ranks of Shas parliamentarians.

The Wellspring of Torah Education

The educational system in Israel is composed of three principal trends: state, state religious and unofficial. Most ultra-orthodox parents send their children to "unofficial" schools, which include the mainly Ashkenazi "Independent" educational network and the Shas party's Wellspring of Torah Education network. Most "unofficial" schools are deemed "unofficial recognized" institutions, and while largely autonomous, they must operate according to codes set by the Ministry of Education (Schiffer 1999, 4). Two distinct types of pupils, each with its own set of expections, attend schools in the Wellspring of Torah Education network. The first group consists of children from Sephardi ultra-orthodox families, who otherwise would be placed in schools of the "Independent" educational network. A second, significant, group of pupils consists of children of families that keep some but not all ritual observances and whose needs were not met by the state-religious schools, or who were deemed unacceptable to the "Independent" education network. Many children from the latter group are from families that have recently become religious. They are not deemed sufficiently orthodox for the

Independent network, yet the parents want their children to have a stronger Jewish education than what is offered in the state religious schools (Sabag 2001).

Because of generous budgeting and abundant services made available through the network, the Wellspring of Torah Education has been able to offer especially attractive services to clients that in the past had been poorly served by state educational institutions. A state investigative committee in 1999 determined that schools in the Wellspring of Torah Education network received inordinately high funding because they were funded on a per class basis, instead of per student. The mean school size in the Wellspring of Torah Education network was 125 pupils, compared with 387 in the state and state religious streams. The mean class size in the network was 20 students compared with 29 in the state and state religious streams (Ne'eman et al. 1999). The committee's recommendations were to restrict the opening of new schools in the network, and to standardize funding of Wellspring of Torah Education institutions on a per student basis in communities where other schools are funded on that basis. The reforms, which were to take effect beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, may have weakened Shas's ability to deliver this appealing form of patronage to its clients.

Data and Methods

The main empirical investigation I will undertake will test whether the presence of institutions belonging to The Wellspring of Torah Education educational network in given localities generate greater support for the Shas party in those localities.

According to figures furnished by The Wellspring of Torah Education, in July 2001 there were 126 schools and Talmud Torahs officially registered with the educational

network in 48 communities in Israel. Twenty-six of these communities have more than one Wellspring of Torah Education institution. Jerusalem has the most, with 22 schools, followed by the predominantly ultra-orthodox city of Bnei Brak, which has 12. Of the communities with The Wellspring of Torah Education institutions, 22 have only one such institution (The Wellspring of Torah Education 2001).

All of the urban localities in Israel with 10,000 or more inhabitants are divided into statistical areas, quarters and sub-quarters. These divisions were used to organize demographic and social data in the 1995 census and they are also the divisions used in reporting electoral results from the 1996 and 1999 elections to the 14th and 15th Knessets. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, which mapped the division into statistical areas, "the division is primarily intended to establish small, homogeneous urban geographical units within each locality which accurately reflect the unique characteristics of the locality" (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998). Besides identifying the community in which each school is based, I have identified the specific statistical area in which each school is located, based on its street address.

In many urban localities, statistical areas correspond closely with "housing classes," neighborhoods or distinct geographic area that were built to absorb a relatively homogeneous population of immigrants (Hasson 1993, 19). Although social class is not necessarily a good determinant of political affiliation (Yishai 1982, 87), the relative uniformity of class, ethnic origin and period of immigration within housing classes creates relatively homogeneous districts that often contain some foundations of political cleavage. Hasson argues that urban social movements in Jerusalem have historically crystallized not along class interests, but over discontent with public goods and

services—including public housing, physical infrastructure, education, health care and transportation—that are provided for collective consumption among certain housing classes (1993, 4, 35).

The organization of social and demographic data according to statistical areas allows important controls to be introduced in the analysis. By controlling for income, ethnicity and location, it is easier to parse the independent effect of Wellspring of Torah Education institutions on electoral support for Shas.

Qualitative Enrichment and Isolating the Target Population

The next step is to proceed with the systematic collection of data on the location, size, and opening dates of Wellspring of Torah Education institutions and electoral results from the same locations. Data in the analysis will be culled from social and demographic statistics from the 1995 Census of Population and Housing and parliamentary and local election results obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics. These will be enriched with qualitative data from interviews that I have conducted and will conduct with state officials and administrators, and staff and clients of the Wellspring of Torah Education network, in order to uncover the structure and quality of relations between the network, its clients, and state authorities. My research will also explore governmental and alternative civil society initiatives that target the same populations that are served by the Wellspring of Torah Education.

In order to gain a better understanding of the appeal of the Shas party to non-ultra-orthodox Sephardim, I hope to isolate non-ultra-orthodox districts in the analysis. Ultra-orthodox neighborhoods can be excluded from the analysis by identifying and not

including districts where ultra-orthodox parties win a clear preponderance of votes in local and national elections (Diskin 1999, 23). Alternatively, ultra-orthodox areas can also be identified for exclusion by examining the Labor Force Surveys issued by the Israel Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which indicate the proportion of fathers in a given area whose last formal education was in yeshiva (Berman 1999b).

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